



# ALL ABOUT BOOKS

November/December 2005

Largo Public Library Readers' Advisory Group

“History is the essence of innumerable biographies.” Thomas Carlyle

## Veterans' Day Reading

### Military Memoirs & Biographies

Military history books come in many forms. Journalists write books about the wars they are sent to cover; military leaders write books about the strategy and tactics employed; historians write books analyzing military decisions and their results; politicians write books to tout their own military service.

Readers, however, have a clear preference. The most appealing military histories have always been personal accounts of battle told by those who experience a war firsthand. Readers are drawn to personal accounts because they reveal the individuals behind the uniforms and tell stories with a human dimension.

For today's soldiers, personal narratives may take the form of blogging--posting real-time chronicles of combat on Internet web sites. Although at least 200 active-duty soldiers currently keep blogs, personal war narratives are not an invention of the Internet age.

Long before there were blogs, soldiers kept journals, wrote memoirs, and told their stories to others. Those stories were published, and continue to be published, as biographies or memoirs.

Largo Public Library has a large collection of military memoirs and biographies. These books tell the stories of individuals who have served their country under extraordinary circumstances. The accounts of wars past reflect the same intensity of experience as blogs of the current war, despite the fact that they may have taken longer--in some cases, decades--to reach their readers.

This Veteran's Day, remember those who have served our country, from World War I to the current war in Iraq. Read their stories. Pick up our booklist **Military Memoirs & Biographies** at the Information Desk on the first floor for some suggested titles.

#### Sources:

Bancroft, Colette, “Shocked and Awed,” [The St. Petersburg Times](#) (August 25, 2005).

Finer, Jonathan, “The New Ernie Pyles: Sgtlissie and 67cshdocs: On Internet Blogs, Soldiers in Iraq Offer Up Inside Story on the War,” [The Washington Post](#) (August 12, 2005).

Maslin, Janet, “Soldiers' Stories,” [The Saint Petersburg Times](#) (August 28, 2005).

Nylen, Robert, “Writing About War: This Time It's Personal: Interest in War is High, But So Are Readers' Standards,” [Publishers Weekly](#) (May 9, 2005).

## The Second Story

Collective personal war narratives, such as Tom Brokaw's [The Greatest Generation](#) (940.548173 Brokaw), and regimental histories, such as Stephen Ambrose's [Band of Brothers](#) (940.5421 Ambrose), are located in the history area of the nonfiction collection on the second floor of Largo Public Library.

For assistance in finding a particular title or topic in military history, stop by the Reference Desk on the second floor. As a general guide for browsing the shelves, military history can be found in the following Dewey Decimal numbers:

940.4	World War I
940.54	World War II
951.904	Korea
956.704	Persian Gulf and Iraq
959.804	Vietnam

## Season's Readings

In recent years, bestselling authors like John Grisham, Janet Evanovich, and David Baldacci have written Christmas-themed books, just in time for the holidays. Although some critics have suggested that these books are merely “random acts of commerce,” Christmas stories by popular authors are, in fact, a well-established literary tradition.

In 1843, Charles Dickens was already a successful writer when he decided to write a long story for “the Christmas market.” That long story was [A Christmas Carol](#), which remains one of the most universally beloved holiday tales.

After [A Christmas Carol](#), Dickens wrote four more Christmas books, which were also immensely popular at the time. These books were designed for gift-giving and inspired a host of similar publications for the Christmas market by other well-known writers of the day. Dickens then launched a weekly magazine and wrote annual “Christmas numbers” for the holiday issues. Again, Dickens' idea was imitated by many other magazines at the time.

As in Dickens' time, Christmas stories by today's authors are popular because of their themes of the generosity of the human spirit and the need for human contact.

Largo Public Library has a great selection of Christmas stories, written by favorite writers from both the past and present. Pick up our booklist **Stories for the Christmas Season from Favorite Writers Past and Present** at the Information Desk in the fiction area on the first floor.

### Sources:

Danford, Natalie, “Twisted Christmas,” [Publishers Weekly](#), v.251, i.44, p.18 (November 1, 2004).

Glancy, Ruth, “Charles Dickens,” [Dictionary of Literary Biography](#), vol. 159. Detroit: Gale Research (1996).

## As Good as the Book?

When Hollywood turns a book into a film, readers have a distinct advantage over mere filmgoers. Readers of the book have experienced the telling of the story, with all its nuances, in the way the author intended. Readers have insight into the characters' minds and can “fill in the blanks” if the film inadvertently fails to convey a crucial element of the plot. Before you head to the theater this fall and winter, get ahead of the other filmgoers and check out the book. Pick up our booklist **Books Becoming Movies** for a list of titles recently released or coming soon to theaters.

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